

Bonus Marchers

1932

B E F

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B E F

Bonus Expeditionary Force



BALLADS

of the

B • E • F

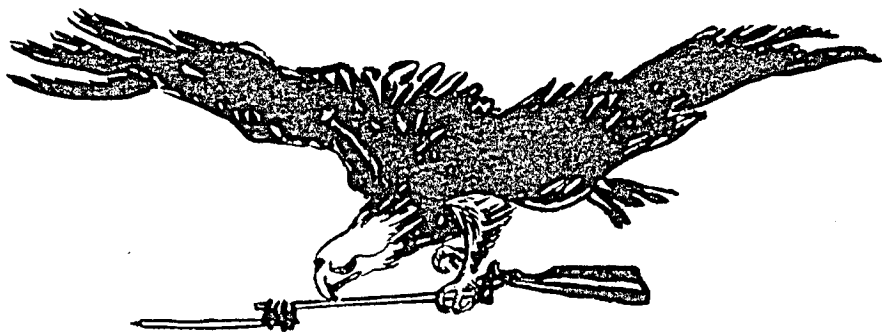


COVENTRY HOUSE
NEW YORK, 1932

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THE ASHES OF ANACOSTIA

The camp at Anacostia now
Is a waste of ashes black,
For they put the torch to the tattered tent
And the flame to the crazy shack.

But there's a wasteland in many a heart
That the rulers do not see:
For the searing flame of betrayal
Makes ashes of loyalty.

HE FED THE KIDS IN BELGIUM

He fed the kids in Belgium,
In Belgium over the sea;
Their hungry cries
Brought tears to his eyes,
For a tender heart had he.
But when American babies
Starve at his door, alas,
To keep them quiet
The Hoover diet
Is gas.

He fed the kids in Belgium
On a comprehensive plan,
He raised the money
For milk and honey,
For he was a miracle man.
But when American babies
Are brought to hunger's pass,
To their consternation
The Hoover ration
Is gas.

THE GREAT HUMANITARIAN

A song I'll sing of a notable thing
That happened some years ago.
The Belgian folk fell under the yoke
Of a terrible foreign foe.
He seized their bread and they wept unfed,
Child and woman and man;
But from this sad fate they were saved by the
great
Humanitarian.

He heard their cry with a tear in his eye,
For a great big heart had he,
And he swore to save the Belgians brave
In the name of Charity.
He issued a call to Americans all
And we raised the cash for his plan,
We couldn't resist him, for he had a system
Humanitarian!

Bright grew his name, though all personal fame
He sternly tried to prevent,
And when he returned with the honors he'd
earned,
We made him our President.

THE GREAT HUMANITARIAN—(*Concluded*)

For we said, "If distress this land should possess,
He'll save us if anyone can;
To cure our follies he will have a policy
Humanitarian."

And so when the slump came and hit us a bump
We thought it was very queer
That the succor he gave to the Belgians brave
Wasn't forthcoming here.
The starving he met with the bayonet,
And to babies American
'Twas gas he fed instead of the bread
Humanitarian.

So we'll tell him to pack and sail right back
To Europe over the foam,
And drop in the ocean his singular notion
That Charity ends at home.
By this maneuver Big-Hearted Hoover
Will end where he began,
For foreigners only slicing boloney
Humanitarian.

THE HAPPY AMERICAN

How happy to be an American,
One of the chosen breed,
Who live in a land of abundance,
Where no one is ever in need.
As long as a man is willing to work
He is bound to get on well,
And there are two chickens in every pot---
There are, like Hell!

How happy to be a dweller
In the land of the Brave and Free,
Where Special Privilege is Unknown
And there's Opportunity!
Here Equal Distribution of Wealth
Spreads calm contentment's spell,
And there are two cars in every garage—
There are, like Hell!

How happy to live in the U. S. A.
From crime and violence free,
Where gangs and rackets never disturb
Public security!
Where the gilded rewards of a life of shame
Never tempt Our Nell,
For the working girl makes more than the tart—
She does, like Hell!

THE HAPPY AMERICAN—(*Concluded*)

How happy to be a citizen
Where the voice of the people rules,
Where there are no grafters in office,
Nor corporation tools;
Where justice, the right of everyman,
No one can buy and sell,
And the courts are the poor man's refuge—
They are, like Hell!

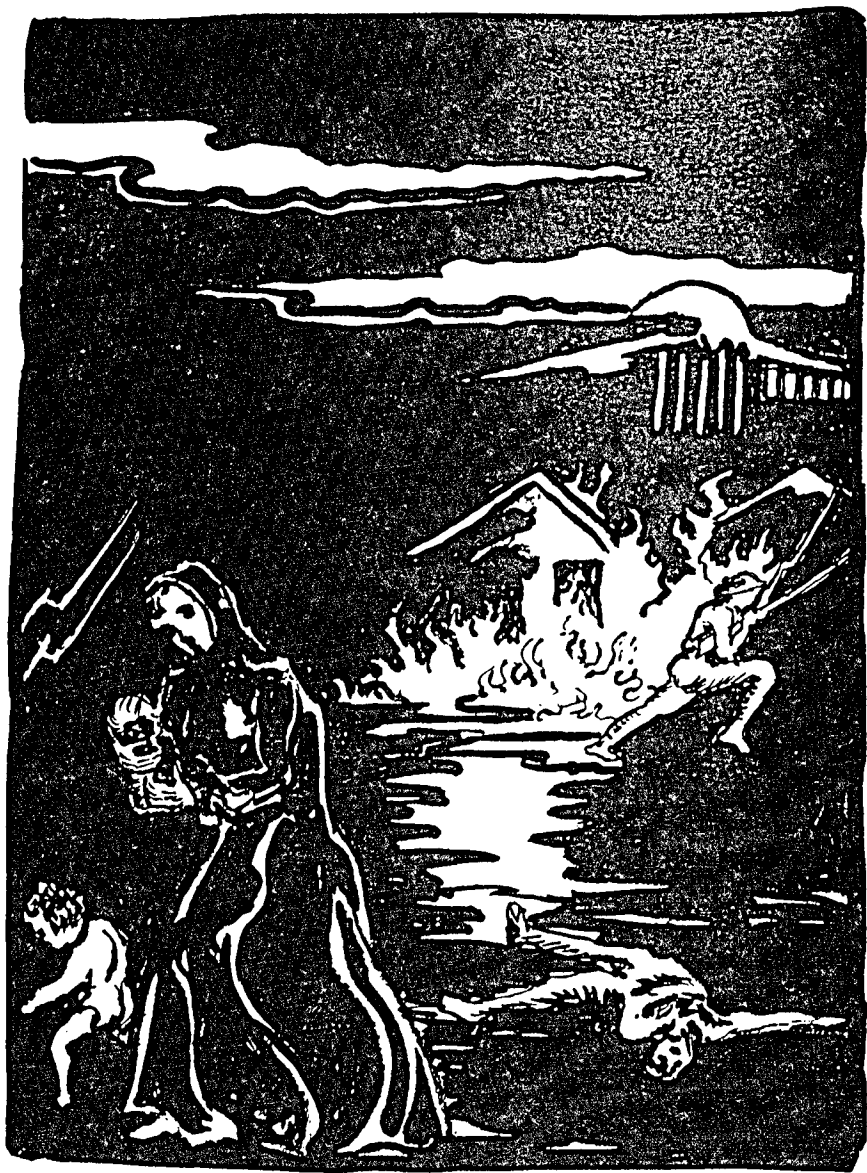
How happy to be a freeman
In the land of mirth and cheer,
Where life floats gaily on rivers of wine
And oceans of foaming beer.
No bigot troubles this favored land,
No kill-joy here may dwell,
And personal freedom is unrestrained—
It is, like Hell!

How happy to be a soldier
Of the old Red, White and Blue
Paid like a banker in time of war,
And cared for afterward too,
With a job and a home in the city
Or a fertile farm in the dell,
For like Princes we treat our Veterans—
We do, like Hell!

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER GOT A
LUCKY BREAK

The Unknown Soldier got a lucky break:
In his moment of agony,
He was proud to know that he got his death
Facing the enemy.

But the martyrs of the B. E. F.
Took with them to the grave
This bitter thought: they were done to death
By the land they fought to save!



NO UNDUE VIOLENCE

*(The N. Y. Evening Post of August 3, 1932,
quotes Secretary of War Hurley as saying that
"no undue violence" was used in expelling the
B. E. F. from Washington.)*

"We used no undue violence"—

Bill Hushka, listen to this!

It will still your moans

And comfort your bones

And fill you full of bliss!

"We used no undue violence"—

Eric Carlson, it's tough!

You asked for bread

And they gave you lead,

But they never meant to be rough!

"We used no undue violence"—

So, Baby Myers, be still!

Though it isn't quite plain

To your little brain,

You were gassed with the best of will!

"We used no undue violence"—

Now, Baby Mann, stop crying!

If you fret and grieve

You might make us believe

That an Eminent Man is lying!

THE PRESIDENT HAS A BIRTHDAY

*("Optimism Rife on President's 58th Birthday—
A large white cake, modelled after the White
House, was presented on behalf of the United
States Lines."—N. Y. Herald Tribune, August
11, 1932.")*

The President had a birthday,
And they sent him a great big cake;
They modelled it like the White House
And put it in to bake.
It was covered all over with icing,
A pure and glistening white,
And he cut it for his birthday guests—
But these he didn't invite:

Bill Hushka: Address, Arlington;
Eric Carlson: Address, the same.
Occupation: American soldiers—
Fought for their country,
Upheld its fame.
But why invite them?—
Bill sleeps soundly,
Cake wouldn't tempt him,
With icing and nuts;

THE PRESIDENT HAS A BIRTHDAY—(Continued)

And Eric's digestion
Is much unsettled,
He can't eat cake
With a hole in his guts.

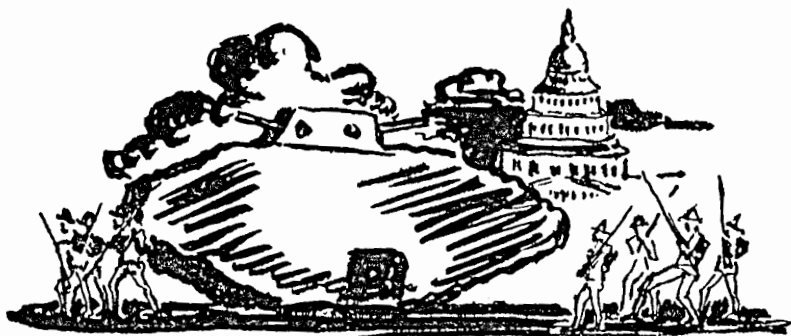
The President had a birthday,
And the cake was good to the taste;
It was rich with eggs and butter,
And it didn't go to waste.
Delicate ladies and gentlemen
Relished it, every bite,
And what a treat for the children!—
But these he didn't invite:

Gertrude Mann—eight weeks old she was;
Bernard Meyers—just twelve weeks he:
Children of American soldiers,
Lucky to be born in
The land of the free.
But cake with icing
Is much too rich for them;
They couldn't enjoy it
Because, alas,
Their baby tummies
Got a touch of colic
When the Army fed them
That lovely gas.

THE PRESIDENT HAS A BIRTHDAY—(*Concluded*)

The President had a birthday,
And Optimism was Rife
As the smiling guests assembled,
For the Market was showing life.
So the President cut and passed a cake
To show that his heart was light,
And the act was a happy symbol—
But these he didn't invite—

B. E. F.: Address, America.
Occupation: Vagrants and bums.
One-time heroes (a long long while ago);
Used to living
On fresh air and crumbs.
So why invite them?
They aren't optimists—
They wouldn't appreciate
The President's plans.
The cake that's so good
For bankers and brokers
Would be very bad for
Starved veterans!



GENEVA AND WASHINGTON

The American Delegation
Spoke up in the Council of Peace;
And they said, "Our ultimate object
Is that all War shall cease.
We know that day is distant,
And we're not impractical cranks,
But at least let us ban, as we should and can,
The use of gas and tanks!"

The American Delegation
To a noble thought gave birth,
That was heard and hailed by the nations,
The war-weary nations of earth;
And in every Capital City—
Except, as it chanced, in one—
It was praised and quoted—but it was not noted
In the City of Washington!

THE BALLAD OF ERIC CARLSON

I'll tell you about a sturdy lad,
And Carlson was his name,
He volunteered in 'Seventeen
To play the soldier's game.
He served his country gallantly
When fighting was required,
Good luck was his and kept him safe
'Til war's last shot was fired.

Yet now he lies in Arlington,
I'll only say what's true,
With a bullet in his abdomen—
That's belly, to you.

In 'Frisco by the Golden Gate
Was Eric Carlson's home.
Ten years he lived and labored there
And never wished to roam.
He did his job and earned his pay,
He was no man to shirk,
And then hard times fell on the land,
And threw him out of work.

THE BALLAD OF ERIC CARLSON—(Continued)

But now from labor he can rest
In a grave that's fresh and new,
With a bullet in his abdomen—
Or belly, to you.

For work each day he looked in vain
From early morn to night,
He cut another hole in his belt
So he could draw it tight.
And when he heard of the B. E. F.
Whose travels had begun,
He joined his buddies of other days
And marched to Washington.

But he never thought of staying there
Under the grass and the dew,
With a bullet in his abdomen—
Yes, belly to you.

Then Carlson said, "I need relief,
The Bonus now will do;"
But a wise and thoughtful President
Said, "That's not good for you.

THE BALLAD OF ERIC CARLSON—(*Concluded*)

The benefits of such a plan
Are only temporary,
But how about a permanent home
In our lovely cemetery?"

So Eric Carlson earned at last
What Hoover thought his due—
A bullet in the abdomen—
Belly, to you.

And so like any other tale
My simple story ends.
The only moral I suggest
Is this: It all depends.
The racketeer who gets the goods
Is welcome at the banks;
But if you fight your country's wars,
Be satisfied with thanks.

For you were a hero in 'Seventeen
But a bum in 'Thirty-two,
Rating a bullet in the—well,
Say belly, to you.



PILATE, HEROD AND HOOVER

(According to the N. Y. Journal, the troops, once they drove the veterans into the woods, used the bayonet on them freely. One veteran was bayoneted in the side and wounded seriously.)

Behold the red stigmata,
Behold the wounded side!
Another martyred savior wears
The signs of the Crucified.
Pilate, Herod and Hoover,
The centuries know them yet,
For the Son of Man they have nails and spear
Or gas and the bayonet!

"ONLY TWO COURSES"

("Under the circumstances but two courses were left open to the President. One was to acquiesce in the violence and surrender the government to the mob. The other was to uphold law and order and suppress the mob."—Secretary Hurley, N. Y. Evening Post, August 3, 1932.)

"Only two courses were open,
As anyone can see:
To vindicate law and order
Or yield to anarchy."
Granted!—the Chiefs of Government
Cannot tolerate mobs—
But isn't it strange you never thought
Of giving the workless jobs?

"Only two courses were open"—
When men who had fought for you
Starved in the streets of our cities,
Finding no work to do—
When in the richest of countries
Babies wept unfed—
Strange it never occurred to you
To give the hungry bread!

"ONLY TWO COURSES"—(*Concluded*)

"Only two courses were open"—
To the Higher Racketeers
Who look on human suffering
With lofty well-fed sneers.
And thus will your names be noted
By History's merciless pen:
"They knew how to rise to Power,
But not how to act like Men!"



THE BLACK BOY'S PRAYER

(According to the N. Y. American of July 29th, 1932, a big Negro Veteran stood in the boughs of a tree as the regular troops advanced against the B. E. F., waving an American Flag and praying, "God that gave us this h'yar country, help us now!"—Readers will remember Napoleon's saying, "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions!")

"God that gave us this h'yar country,
Help us, help us now!"
Hear that crazy darky praying
Up there on the bough!
Black boy, wave the Flag you fought for—
But I am afraid
God as usual takes the side
Of the better-armed brigade!

"God that gave this land to all men,
Help us keep our own!"
Hear that crazy darky praying
Up there all alone!
"Black boy, what you doin' there?
Come down, you black rascallion,
Don't you know God takes the side
Of the heaviest battalion?"

THE FLOWER OF THE FIGHTING RACE

*("A good soldier takes no chances"—Secretary
of War, Patrick J. Hurley.)*

"Good soldiers take no chances"—
Begorra, Pat, you're right,
And you showed your worth as a warrior
By stayin' far from the fight.

When the unarmed host of the starving,
Begging for bread, advances,
Give them the gas and the bayonet,
It's safer than takin' chances.

Too bad you weren't our Gin'ral
Some years ago in France—
'Tis you would have licked old Hindenburg
Without ever takin' a chance.

"Good soldiers take no chances"—
Bedad, Pat, you're a case!
'Tis men like you give the Irish
The name of the Fighting Race!

TO CERTAIN LEGION POSTS WHICH
CONDEMNED THE BONUS MARCHERS

Hang on to those good fat jobs, boys,
And keep your snoots in the troughs;
If the boss says black's white,
You tell him he's right,
And be sure to spit when he coughs.

Stick to the good old payroll, boys,
At the Court House or City Hall;
Don't be a slob,
Lose a white-collar job,
By heeding your buddies' call.

Your buddies are hungry and ragged,
And weary and weak with despair;
But can the pity,
You're sitting pretty,
So what the hell do you care?



REPUBLICS ARE NOT UNGRATEFUL

"Republics are ungrateful," so they say;
Maybe it once was so, but not today—
Maybe in lesser lands it still is true,
But not in America, Nineteen Thirty-Two.

Bill Hushka's case alone proves my contention,
But Eric Carlson's also let me mention.
Good soldiers both, with services recorded,
Their country did not leave them unrewarded.

No!—but in Arlington, last home of the brave,
Eric and Bill each has an honored grave,
Buried with pomp that is the soldier's due—
Of course we had to shoot them first, it's true.

But where they only asked back pay and bread,
The warrior's nobler food we gave them—lead;
And thinking jobs for them too ordinary,
Deeded them homes in our best cemetery.

And there they sleep, all toil and trouble done,
At Government expense; and I for one,
Protest against that slander old and hateful—
There's one Republic that is not ungrateful!

"OUR WORK IS DONE"

—with Apologies to Longfellow.

("Our work is done."—Brigadier-General Perry L. Mills, as the last of the B. E. F. camps went up in flames.)

Our work is done, and the darkness
Falls from the rump of Night,
As a turd is wafted downward
From a buzzard in his flight.

No more will the lights of the billets
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me
That my soul cannot resist:

A feeling of sadness and longing,
And a highly localized pain,
For now that I've burned the last dam camp,
I cannot burn them again.

So I think I'll read some poem
Written by Eddie Guest,
To remind me that of all lands
This land is the very best.

OUR WORK IS DONE—(*Concluded*)

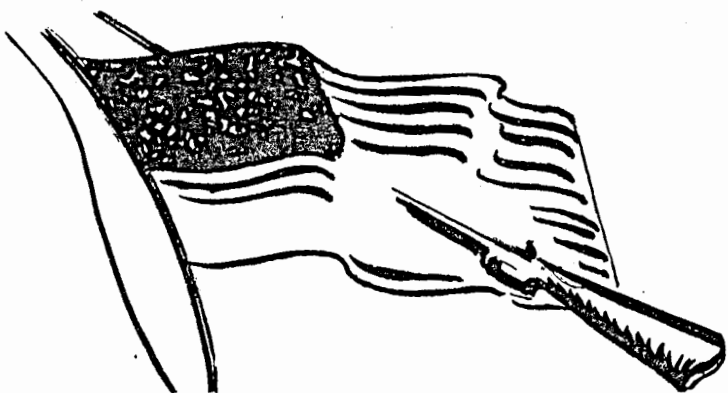
I won't read the grand old masters,
I won't read the bards sublime
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time;

For a strain of martial music
Or the swell of a noble tune
Might make me think that the job we did
Was a trifle picayune.

Then I might get sentimental
And admit down deep in my heart
What a dirty deal those veterans
Got from the very start—

Who, asking for honest labor,
And starving day and night,
Still kept in their souls a simple faith
That their country would treat them
right.

But what the hell!—they are gone now,
Every lousy vet,
For they folded their tents like the Arabs
When we gave them the bayonet!



A WARNING TO THE WORLD

(The President is Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces of the United States. General Douglas MacArthur is Chief of Staff of the Army. It was these two men whose intrepidity saved the nation from the B. E. F.)

Now all ye Powers and Potentates,
Stop, look and listen, I say,

A WARNING TO THE WORLD—(*Concluded*)

If you have ever indulged a thought
Of war with the U. S. A.
It's certain that you'll be out of luck
And we will give you the laugh,
For we have a dauntless Commander-in-
Chief
And a wonderful Chief of Staff.

When jobless workers begging for bread
Imperilled the Government,
And starving babies whimpered for milk
With a clearly seditious intent,
'Twas they who answered with gas and
guns,
And gave these rebels the gaff—
Our noble, dauntless Commander-in-Chief
And our wonderful Chief of Staff.

So Europe and Asia, watch your step,
Don't tackle the U. S. A.;
Or if you do, let us ask of you
One favor while yet we may:
Send women and children and unarmed men,
For they cannot frighten, by half,
Our grim and dauntless Commander-in-
Chief
And our wonderful Chief of Staff!

LIVE AND LEARN

(Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Chief of Staff, who directed the operations against the B. E. F. in Washington, called the Veterans "insurrectionists" and "a mob.")

When General Douglas MacArthur led an army
in France,
Who was it leaped to action when he gave the
word "Advance?"
Who was it went for the Heinies with bayonets,
bombs and fists?—
Were we heroes grand in No-Man's-Land, or
"insurrectionists?"

When General Douglas MacArthur (several
miles in the rear)
Said "We'll break the Hindenburg Line, for the
zero hour is here,"
It was he who got the glory, but who was it did
the job?
Were we heroes grand in No-Man's-Land, or
only a lousy mob?

LIVE AND LEARN—(*Concluded*)

Well, live and learn is the law of life, and I
guess we've learned a lot
Since the time we chased the Kaiser through the
hell of shell and shot,
Since the day we followed the Flag to France and
marched to the sound of drums—
We were heroes grand in No-Man's-Land, but in
Washington we're bums!

THE PRISONER OF THE BIG WHITE HOUSE

Oh the strangest Prisoner in the land
Lives in a big white house—
In a cage that is fit for a lion
He moves with the soul of a mouse.
And alert at gate and portal,
Door and chamber and hall,
Are a swarm of secret servants,
On guard lest Vengeance call.

The Prisoner may not stroll abroad
In the comradeship of the street,
Lest suddenly the accusing eyes
Of Hunger he should meet.
He may not know the common touch
Nor walk in the common ways,
Lest he feel suddenly face to face
Stern Retribution's gaze.

THE PRISONER OF THE BIG WHITE HOUSE—
(Concluded)

I pity the white house Prisoner,
For prison takes its toll;
Its marks are the flabby hands and face,
And the shriveled heart and soul;
For the blood runs thin and icy,
And the mind grows warped and sere,
In the Prison of Guilty Conscience,
Locked in by the Jailer Fear.

THE PRESIDENT'S GARDEN PARTY

("Gala Tea Party to Open Hoover Election Drive . . . President's formal acceptance of the Republican renomination will be made a gala social event . . . There will be a buffet luncheon and a garden party on the White House grounds. The U. S. Marine Band will give a concert."—N. Y. American, Aug. 4, 1932.)

Isn't it just too sweet, my dear,
This plan of the President
To make his Notification
A Gala Social Event?
I just love garden parties,
They remind me of England and France,
With the ladies all in Summer frocks,
And the men in flannel pants.

(Bill Hushka isn't coming—
He wouldn't look the part,
With a bloody hole in his only shirt
And a bullet in his heart.)

THE PRESIDENT'S GARDEN PARTY—(*Concluded*)

The band is playing divinely—
The President's such a dear,
He and his gracious lady
Just radiate good cheer.
Their only thought is for others,
That you can plainly see—
And what a generous buffet lunch,
And such delicious tea!

(Is Eric Carlson coming?—
Now what a foolish question!
You know that little accident
Has ruined his digestion.)

I'm glad the speeches are over,
Though the President's was grand,
It proves he's the only statesman
Able to save our land.
His voice somehow is soothing,
Why even the children were quiet!—
And I'm glad he didn't say a word
About that nasty riot!

(Those veterans' children were such
brats,
Crying for milk all day—
It's nice that all but the two who died
At last have gone away!)



TWO EPITAPHS

WILLIAM HUSHKA

Here lies William Hushka,
Who volunteered to save
The land of his adoption
When the call was for the brave.
And later when Bill was hungry,
We gave him generous terms—
He was willing to work for his upkeep,
So we're letting him feed the worms.

ERIC CARLSON

Now pray for Eric Carlson,
 A soldier good and true,
An honor to his country
 And the old Red, White and Blue.
And when he asked assistance,
 A grateful country gave
To Eric, who was homeless,
 A cozy home—the grave.

CALLING ON THE MAYOR

("The straggling remnant of the New York contingent of the Bonus Expeditionary Force, 100 ragged, footsore men, dropped in on City Hall Park this morning . . . The Mayor had not arrived . . . They loafed about the park, a few detectives watching them, while ten additional policemen waited in the basement of the City Hall as a reserve in case of trouble. Shortly before eleven, when the Mayor had still not put in an appearance, the policemen ordered the expeditionary forces to disperse."—N. Y. Evening Post, August 8th, 1932.)

We came to town on the Pennsy, and seeing the
day was fair,
Some practical joker ups and says, "Let's go and
visit the Mayor.
He likes to welcome distinguished guests on the
steps of the City Hall,
And so I know he'll put on a show when the
Veterans come to call!"

CALLING ON THE MAYOR—(*Continued*)

Here we are on Broadway, boys,
Come on now, show a smile!
Oh what the hell's Broadway to us
But just another mile?
Another mile together
While our feet stick through the leather,
And our bellies wonder whether
Food and drink are out of style?

Headquarters hears we're marching, and now the
telephone hums:

"Send some dicks and bulls to the Hall, enough
to handle these bums.

Treat 'em nice if they're meek and mild, other-
wise crack their heads,

And have reserves in the basement, where we
used to beat up the Reds."

Here we are at City Hall,

"The Mayor we'd like to see."

"He isn't here, he won't be here

'Til sometimes after three."

So we says, "We know he'll play fair,

Let us call him at the Mayfair,"

But they answered "On your way, there,"

So we never could agree.

CALLING ON THE MAYOR—(*Concluded*)

Now you see there's a lot of diff'rence between
American Vets
And foreign Princes and Premiers coming to
cancel debts;
Queens and aviators and movie-stars get a
break—
But a bunch of zeros, one-time heroes—pardon
us, our mistake!

Here we are on Broadway, boys,
I hope you're feeling well.
The bands are out, the people shout,
This certainly is swell!
The ticker-tape is streaming,
And the Mayor on us is beaming—
Oh, excuse me, I was dreaming!—
Now I ask you, ain't it hell?

"TO HIM THAT HATH"

"To him that hath shall be given"—
You'll find that in The Book:
It's a source of strength and comfort
To the grafter and the crook,
To the usurer and banker
And the shrewd monopolist;
And it is the creed, for it meets the need
Of every lobbyist.

And the agents of Special Privilege,
When they go to Washington,
Always get what they ask for,
Each and every one!
For their hands are never empty—
They have, they give and they get,
And the promise of the Good Book
Never has failed them yet.

So the error the jobless veterans made,
Everyone understands:
When they asked for their rights at the Capital,
They went with empty hands.
But the bitter lesson they learned, no doubt
Has into their souls been driven:
Next time if they *have* what soldiers use,
Whatever they ask shall be *given*!

THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE B. E. F.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of
the tanks,
They rumbled through the streets behind the in-
fantry in ranks;
They were out to save the country for the rich
men and the banks,

But the B. E. F. lives on!
Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,
Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,
Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,
The B. E. F. lives on!

I have seen them put the torches to the shacks
that we called home,
And the flames were red that cast their light on
Capitol and Dome,
And the mothers and the weeping kids, they
turned them out to roam,

But the B. E. F. lives on!
Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,
Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,
Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,
The B. E. F. lives on!

I have seen the sabres gleaming as they lopped
off veteran's ears,
And the bayonets were scarlet when they pricked
us in the rears,

THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE B. E. F.—(Concluded)

And the gas that choked and burned our throats
filled brave men's eyes with tears,

But the B. E. F. lives on!

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

The B. E. F. lives on!

I have read a fiery message in the flames of many
a shack:

For bread you gave us bullets and we fled from
your attack,

But the battle isn't over—Mr. Hoover, we'll
be back!—

For the B. E. F. lives on!

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

The B. E. F. lives on!

Bill Hushka's body lies mould'ring in the grave,
Eric Carlson's body lies mould'ring in the grave,
Two babies' bodies lie mould'ring in the grave,

But their souls go marching on!

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

Glory, glory Herbie Hoover,

Their souls go marching on!

